

# Villages that revived burnt forests to get MoEFCC honour

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DEHRADUN: Around 40 years ago, two villages in Chamba block of Tehri Garhwal district, Jardhari and Chopdiyal, decided to save forests which had turned barren due to forest fires and timber mafia. Preeti Jardhari and Seema Dabral, pradhans of Jardhar and Chopdiyal villages, will be felicitated with "Green and Clean award" on Monday on World Environment Day (June 5) by the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC).

Vijay Jardhari, founder of the "Save Seed Revolution" (an organisation that preserves seeds of diverse varieties in Tehri Garhwal) and a resident of Jardhar, said, "In the 1980s, our forest had almost lost all its trees due to forest fires, timber mafia and

several other reasons. With the trees gone, six reservoirs of our village dried up. We decided to form a 'Van Suraksha Samiti' and planted trees like Oak, Baanj and Buransh (some of these retain water). Eventually, the forest became lush and all the reservoirs were replenished."

Chopdiyal village has a similar story. "Here villagers planted cash crops after turning a 7-km stretch of forest green by afforestation drives. This changed the entire landscape and we have ample water and more fertile soil," said Vinod Dabral, husband of Seema Dabral, the pradhan of Chopdiyal village.

The village is known for cultivating cash crops like high-priced fruits and vegetables. The village also operates on solar energy. Jardhari added,

"Nature has its own way of handling its ecosystem. We simply ensured that no one is damaging the forest and that's how the entire system rejuvenated itself."